

Message Text

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USNAVCOMMSTA LONDON DERRY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U. K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND GENERAL ELECTION PREVIEW

FOLLOWING TRANSMITTED BY CONSULATE GENERAL BELFAST:

BEGIN SUMMARY NORTHERN IRELAND'S 12 WESTMINSTER
CONSTITUENCIES ARE ALREADY REPRESENTED BY AT LEAST SIX
LOYALIST AND REPUBLICAN OPPONENTS OF HMG'S POLICIES
IN NI. (LOYALIST) UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COUNCIL,
WELCOMING ELECTION AS REFERENDUM ON THESE POLICIES,
PLANS TO RUN SINGLE CANDIDATE IN EACH CONSTITUENCY,
PROBABLY INCLUDING LEADERS OF ALL ITS ORGANIZATIONS.
UUUC WOULD ALSO LIKE TO RUN ENOCH POWELL AS ONE OF ITS
CANDIDATES. ELECTION WILL PROBABLY HASTEN SPLIT IN
UNIONIST PARTY AND BIRTH OF FAULKNERITE UNIONIST PARTY.
EXECUTIVE POLITICIANS DO NOT WELCOME ELECTION AT TIME
WHEN VOTERS' FEARS ABOUT NEW CONSTITUTIONAL SETUP ARE
THOUGHT TO BE AT PEAK WHILE BENEFITS HAVE NOT YET BEEN
DEMONSTRATED. THEY ARE SEEKING TO DE-EMPHASIZE
IMPORTANCE OF ELECTION. SEEMS THERE WILL BE NO FORMAL
AGREEMENT ON PRO-EXECUTIVE CANDIDATES, BUT SDLP ARE
OPPOSING TWO ANTI-EXECUTIVE CATHOLIC INCUMBENTS WHILE
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AVOIDING CONSTITUENCIES WHERE THEY WOULD ONLY SPLIT

ANTI-LOYALIST VOTE. ALLIANCE ARE PUTTING UP ONLY THREE CANDIDATES, ABANDONING NORTH DOWN TO GIVE UNIONIST ROY BRADFORD A BETTER CHANCE. NORTHERN IRELAND LABOUR PARTY WILL PROBABLY RUN THREE CANDIDATES IN BELFAST (OFFICIAL) REPUBLICAN CLUBS MAY SUPPORT BERNADETO AND PUT UP OTHERS. PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN HAVE ISSUED "ULTIMATUM" TO BRITISH WHICH EXPIRES FEBRUARY 14, BUT MOST OBSERVERS THINK THEY WILL ABSTAIN. LOYALISTS ARE HOPING FOR AS MANY AS TEN SEATS, WHILE OBJECTIVE OBSERVERS GIVETHEM AROUND SIX, BUT EVERYONE IS HEDGING BECAUSE OF UNCERTAINCIESABOUT MOOD OF VOTERS AND ALTERNATIVE CANDIDATES AMONG WHOM THEY WILL BE ABLE TO CHOOSE. END SUMMARY

L. NORTHERN IRELAND'S (UNDER) REPRESENTATION IN WESTMINSTER REMAINS UNCHANGED IN COMING ELECTION AT 12. OF INCUMBENTS, THERE ARE FOUR LOYALIST/UNIONIST OPPONENTS OF CONSTITUTION ACT, POWER-SHARING AND SUNNINGDALE; ONE UNIONIST WHO WAVERS BETWEEN OPPOSITION AND SUPPORT FOR SANT, ONE WHO HAS KOPPED OUT OF NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICS (ROBIN CHICHESTER-CLARK, WHO SINCE DIRECT RULE HAS BEEN MINISTER OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT,TWO FAULKNER UNIONISTS, ONE ALLIANCE, ONE SDLP, AND TWO CATHOLIC OPPONENTS OF HMG'S POLICIES IN NI.

2. UNITE* ULSTER UNIONIST COUNCIL SAYS ELECTION WILL BE REFERENDUM ON THESE POLICIES, AND HAS DECIDED TO PUT FORWARD SINGLE CANDIDATE IN EACH CONSTITUENCY, PROBABLY INCLUDING LEADERS OF UUUC'S SIX CONSTITUENT ORGANIZATIONS AND (THEY HOPE) ENOCH POWELL. THIS PLAN HAS NOT YET BEEN AGREED IN DETAIL. ULSTER DEFENSE ASSOCIATION SAYS IT WILL BACK CANDIDATES WHO OPPOSE POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL OF IRELAND, AND SUPPORT ULSTER PROTESTANT IDENTITY AND RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION.

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3. ELECTION IS LIKELY TO DEEPEN SPLIT WITHIN ULSTER UNIONIST PARTY AND HASTEN BIRTH OF NEW FAULKNERITE UNIONIST PARTY. PARTY RULES PROVIDE THAT ANY MEMBER WHO OPPOSES OFFICIALLY-ADOPTED CANDIDATE IS LIABLE FOR EXPULSION. REPORTEDLY ULSTER UNIONISTS (HARRY WEST, GLENGALL STREET, OFFICIAL) WILL NOT DIRECTLY CHALLENGE FAULKNERITE CANDIDATES BACKED BY IMPERIAL (I.E. WESTMINSTER) CONSTITUENCY ASSOCIATIONS, BUT WILL BACK

OTHER LOYALISTS IN THOSE CASES. ON OTHER HAND,
FAULKNERITES ARE TALKING OF BACKING CANDIDATES IN EVERY
CONSTITUENCIES BUT HAVE NOT YET DECIDED FOR SURE.
FORMAL SPLIT COULD COME IN CONSTITUENCIES WHERE TWO
FACTIONS DISAGREE ON NOMINATION PROCEDURES.

4. IT IS NO SECRET THAT PRO-EXECUTIVE PARTIES DO NOT
WELCOME GENERAL ELECTION AT THIS TIME BECAUSE LOYALISTS

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WILL USE IT AS REFERENDUM ON POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS
WHICH ARE NOT YET THOUGHT TO BE WIDELY ACCEPTED
BY ELECTORATE. NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY PYM IS SAID
TO SHARE THIS VIEW. ONE EXECUTIVE MEMBER, PADDY DEVLIN,
TOLD US HE HAS SUGGESTED THAT EXECUTIVE OBTAIN PUBLIC
COMMITMENT FROM HEATH AND WILSON THAT REFERENDUM ON
THESE INSTITUTIONS BE HELD IN NORTHERN IRELAND IN JUNE
IN ORDER TO DE-EMPHASIZE SIGNIFICANCE OF GENERAL
ELECTION; BUT PRESS REPORTS FEBRUARY 11 INDICATE THIS
PROPOSAL IS NOT ON. DEVLIN ALSO HOPES NONE OF HIS
COLLEAGUES WILL RUN; IT WOULD SUGGEST LACK OF
CONFIDENCE IN FUTURE OF EXECUTIVE, AND DEFEAT WOULD

DAMAGE EXECUTIVE'S PRESTIGE.

5. SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT EXECUTIVE PARTIES WILL FORMALLY UNITE BEHIND SINGLE CANDIDATE IN EACH CONSTITUENCY BECAUSE OF FEAR THAT VOTERS WOULD NOT CROSS SECTARIAN LINES TO BACK EXECUTIVE; EXECUTIVE MEMBER MCIVOR FLATLY ASSERTS THERE WILL BE "NO DEALS". BUT THERE ARE SOME SIGNS OF STRATEGY DESIGNED TO AVOID CONFRONTATION FROM WHICH ANTI-EXECUTIVE ELEMENTS WOULD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROFIT. SDLP HAS DECIDED TO FIELD CANDIDATES IN ONLY EIGHT OR NINE CONSTITUENCIES, INCLUDING THOSE HELD BY INCUMBENT REPUBLICANS BERNADETTE DEVLIN MCALISKEY AND FRANK MCMANUS, BUT EXCLUDING STRONGLY PROTESTANT CONSTITUENCIES WHERE ONLY A FAULKNERITE UNIONIST WOULD HAVE ANY HOPE OF BEATING A LOYALIST. ALLIANCE IS THUS FOR PUTTING FORTH CANDIDATES IN ONLY THREE CONSTITUENCIES NOT INCLUDING ITS STRONGEST, NORTH DOW, WHERE HOPES OF UNSEATING ANTI-EXECUTIVE UNIONIST JIM KILFEDDER REST WITH ENVIRONMENT MINISTER ROY BRADFORD, WHO DEPRIVED KILFEDDER OF OFFICIAL UNIONIST CONSTITUENCY ASSOCIATION BACKING. ON OTHER HAND, FAULKNERITES MAY NOT CONTEST SOUTH ANTRIM WHERE ALLIANCE CANDIDATE HAS STRONG UNIONIST FAMILY CONNECTIONS. ALLIANCE'S SITTING MP FOR BELFAST NORTH, STRATTON MILLS, WILL NOT/ RUN; REASON APPARENTLY IS REALIZATION THAT UNIONISTS WILL NEVER FORGIVE HIS APOSTASY, AND WITHOUT THEIR BACKING HE'D NOT HAVE A PRAYER.

6. NORTHERN IRELAND LABOUR PARTY REPORTEDLY PLANS TO RUN THREE CANDIDATES IN BELFAST, MINIMUM NECESSARY TO OBTAIN TV TIME.

7. (OFFICIAL) REPUBLICAN CLUBS REPORTEDLY PLAN TO BACK MRS. MCALISKEY AND PERHAPS FIELD SEVERAL OTHER CANDIDATES. PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY HAS CALLED FOR A BOYCOTT.

8. PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN DEMANDED THAT BRITISH GOVERNMENT TRANSFER EIGHT CONVICTED LONDON BOMBERS TO NORTHERN IRELAND PRISONS, REVOKE PROSCRIPTION OF SINN FEIN AND "GUARANTEE AN END TO HARRASSMENT OF THE POPULATION BY BRITISH FORCES SO THAT A FREE ELECTION CAN BE HELD." THIS "ULTIMATUM" EXPIRES FEBRUARY 14, WHICH WILL GIVE SINN FEIN TIME TO DECIDE WHETHER TO BOYCOTT ELECTION OR, PERHAPS, TO RUN DOLOURS PRICE (ONE OF BOMBERS) AGAINST SDLP LEADER AND DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE GERRY FITT IN WEST BELFAST. LATEST VIEW IS THAT PROVOS ALMOST CERTAIN TO CALL FOR ABSTENTION, WHICH COULD HURT PROVO-ORIENTED INCUMBENT FRANK MCMANUS.

9. LOYALISTS ARE SAYING THEY EXPECT TO WIN AT LEAST
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SIX AND PERHAPS AS MANY AS TEN SEATS, WHILE OBJECTIVE
OBSERVERS CONCEDE THEM SIX OR SEVEN. BECAUSE OF
UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT MOOD OF ELECTORATE AND ALTERNATIVE
CANDIDATES FACING THEM, ALL SOOTHSAYERS ARE HEDGING
BETS.

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